

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

AMERICAN DISCOVERY.

THE DISCOVERIES OF AMERICA, to the Year 1525. By JAMES WEISE, M. A. Two pp. xii. \$2.00. G. P. Putnam's Son.

Mr. Weise assumes, as a certain and undoubted fact, that the Egyptians furnish "the earliest known account of the inhabitants of this continent" and he begins his first chapter with the following paragraph:

"The oldest scriptures, sacred and profane, attest the antiquity of the red race. As early as the antediluvian period this division of the human family had taken possession of the islands and continents of the western hemisphere, where it found an empire, the extent and magnitude of which were of primeval grandeur."

Great in political power, its commercial, agricultural and other economical interests were incomparably vast and unparalleled. The skill of its architects and engineers was exhibited in large and imposing edifices and in extraordinary and extensive public works. Aggressively diligent, its armies overran parts of Europe and Africa, exacting tribute, deposing and substituting rulers.

After this bold exordium we look for a somewhat careful discussion of the theory which is so confidently propounded; but Mr. Weise leaves it all in the air, and makes a very different book from what he has led us to expect. He quotes at considerable length the account of the famous Atlantic island from the "Critias" of Plato, and remarks that this fable is confirmed by the Bible, and the Spanish acounts of the civilization discovered by Cortes in Mexico; and there he stops. He does not seem to be aware that the slight parallelism which he has noticed in Genesis are of no weight whatever as proofs; and as for the vexed question of the history and actual extent of the ancient Mexican civilization, he does not enter upon it, although it is impossible to suppose that he is ignorant of the recent extensive literature of the subject. When he reaches the story of the conquest, in due order of time, he gives us little more than a series of extracts from Bernal Diaz, of which previous writers have made much more effective use. The credulous spirit in which he deals with the alleged traditions of the Egyptians is matched by the scepticism of Mr. Weise, who, after a long and tedious examination of their works, hard denies herself, and after a few years of struggle and misery she fails, is ruined by a false marriage, and dies. Her experiences, we are told, are real. We can easily believe it. The exportation of operatic material from American villages to Paris and Milan is becoming a great national evil. Not one in a thousand of the ambitious and desperately ignorant young girls whom we send to the European musical centres is ever heard from after the "farewell testimonial concert" which usually takes place on the eve of the departure. What becomes of the crowd who fail, who not only obtain no position on the stage but do not even develop into tolerable concert-singers? A great many distressing facts in relation to the life of American girls studying for the stage in Italy, their wrongs, hardships, trials and temptations, have been made public of late years; but those who know all the circumstances are seldom so placed that they can gain the public ear. "Stage-struck" ought to be a warning to ambitious young ladies not to go abroad unless they have money enough to live on while they are studying and a suitable guardian to protect them; and a warning to fond parents and admiring friends not to spoil a girl's whole life by overestimating her abilities.

The entertaining parts of the book are the pictures of the bohemian and upon the whole rather merry life of the American musical colony in Milan, with their perplexities, their poverty, their droll expeditions, their amusements and their occasional little successes. The preparations for a debut, a first night at La Scala, a performance of opera as seen from the prima donna's point of observation, the weaknesses of tenors, the tyranny of managers, and the characteristics of music-masters are described, with superfluous detail to be sure, yet with considerable vivacity. Celebrated teachers are painted and discussed with a freedom of personal criticism which will now and then be found startling. The remarks upon Wardel are in questionable taste, and exception may be taken to the censure upon some other well-known professors, who figure in the story either under their real names or in disguised lights. The account of Lamperti and his *punctum* method, based upon the theory that song comes from the stomach, is so humorous, however, that we forget its acerbity. The best of the portraits are the sympathetic sketches of Trivoli of Milan, and Mameli Garcia, the brother of Malibran. We copy a part of the latter:

"The signor was of medium height, but had an air of being much shorter. His face was a long oval. He wore a slight gray-black mustache, which scarcely concealed a very earnest but mobile mouth. His dark eyes, once evidently placid, were now dimmed with age, and were often peering over spectacles which soured depth. In spite of faded color, they blazed with almost unnatural brightness, every now and then glancing upward with an expression which betrayed the true Spaniard. His forehead was high, broad, and wrinkled. His hair, thin, olive-green, and wrinkled, was covered with a network of minute wrinkles. His hair of unusual fineness, clung with great ceremony to his sharply head. Annabel knew that he was over seventy, although it was scarcely credible, he seemed so much younger. His manner was simplicity itself, and he had all the vivacity of a southern nature. He was very spare, his clothes hung loosely upon him, and his shoulders had a very slight stoop."

But although the author's inaptitude for discussion and the critical examination of doubtful testimony is strongly marked, he has made by sheer industry an interesting and useful book. As a summary of the original records of American discovery and exploration it has a distinct value. Mr. Weise has made a careful and very extensive study of original documents, early publications, rare old maps, tracts, privately printed books and manuscript archives, as well as of recent monographs, and has generally quoted or translated the actual texts, so that his handsome volume becomes a very convenient handbook of the authorities on our early history. His foot-notes are copious, illustrative and generally intelligent, notwithstanding that some of them are clearly superfluous, and that some of the references show a lack of discrimination. The want of the critical faculty which seems to be the great defect in Mr. Weise's intellectual equipment, is apparent both in the substance of the notes and in their omissions. For example, he passes with a brief and very unsatisfactory mention the interesting discussion as to the laudability of Columbus, although he cites so late a contribution to the list of essays on the subject as Captain G. V. Fox's tract published in 1882. It is a very remarkable fact that although we can point out the spot where the Saxons, who made no record of their voyage, landed in England, yet nobody knows the scene of the great discovery by Columbus, although it made a profound sensation throughout the European world, and the navigator left us his own journal of the expedition. No history of "the discoveries of America" is complete without an exhaustive examination of the strange problem where the discoverer, the American, and the European, the necessary course of events—all the professors seated at the piano to hear the young girl's voice.

She commenced singing a group of ariettes to show her power of lungs and way of taking breath; then she sang a solo in perfect scale.

The singer looked good-naturedly. He stopped her after the fourth note:

"Let me sing that again," he said. "In ascending the scale, always accent the note which is the weakest and which is the highest. You are not the best singer in the room, but you are the best in your class."

The singer looked again. With a gesture he stopped her, as she was passing from the seventh to the first note. This time he spoke:

"When I tell you what is to be done, be sure that you understand my meaning before you attempt to do it. Think well over what I say, and get well hold of the sense of my words. You should sing with your heart as much as with the throat. They must be in your brain as well as in your voice."

Annabel blushed. No wonder. He had not said that she was a fool, but he had made her feel like one.

They tried a few more exercises, some with the shake and scales were abandoned for that day. After twenty minutes singing, the professor stopped her.

"Rest," he said briefly; "then we will resume. No voice can or should stand more than twenty minutes consecutive exercises. If you will permit me, I will answer some notes while you repeat them."

"Now, my child, have you brought any song with you to sing?"

Annabel handed him the grand air from "Beatrice de Tenda," for soprano. She is in the middle of her studies, and the professor is a supernumerary.

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